Annual Report
for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012

Workers' Advisers Program

NOVA SCOTIA

NOVA SCOTIA
Chief Worker Adviser

Workers' Advisers Program
5670 Spring Garden Road
Suite 502
PO Box 1063
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2X1

902 424-5050 t
1 800 774-4712
TOLL FREE IN NS
902 424-0530 f

Kenny LeBlanc, B.A., M.A., LL.B.
Chief Worker Adviser

Direct telephone: (902) 424-0460
email: leblankh@gov.ns.ca

May 25, 2012

The Honourable Marilyn More
Minister of Labour & Advanced Education
5151 Terminal Road
Halifax, NS

Dear Minister More:

In accordance with Section 268 of the *Workers' Compensation Act*, S.N.S. 1994-95 c.10, as am., I have the honour of submitting the report of the Workers' Advisers Program for the period April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2012.

Yours truly,

Kenny LeBlanc
Barrister & Solicitor
Chief Worker Adviser

copy: Sandra McKenzie, Deputy Minister
Labour & Advanced Education

copy: Barbara Jones Gordon, Executive Director
Labour Services Branch
Labour & Advanced Education

Contents

Topic	Page
Letter from the Chief Worker Adviser	1
Mandate and History	4
Annual Program Expenditures	5
Personnel	6
Organizational Chart	6
Client Services	7
Intake	7
Operations	8
Case Summary Statistics	8
Process	9
Service Waiting Time	9
Client Count by County	10
Representation	12
Program Statistics	12
Client Satisfaction	14
Client Survey Results	14
Committees and Associations	16
Canadian Association of Workers' Advisers and Advocates	16
Workplace Safety and Insurance System Advisory Councils and Working Groups	16
Other Committees and Associations	17
Professional Development and Training	17

Letter from the Chief Worker Adviser

The Workers' Advisers Program had another busy and productive year in 2011–12. At year-end the Program had 1025 active files. During the year the Program had 1030 requests for service, 999 files were opened, and we provided service to 1976 clients.

In 2011–12 the Program filed 374 appeals with the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal on behalf of workers. We also filed 205 appeals to Hearings Officers and 2 appeals to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.

The average wait time for intake services was 7.6 weeks, which exceeds the Program's target of 6 weeks. Meeting our target has been a problem in the past few years. The most important reason for this problem is the increasingly litigious and adversarial nature of our work. As I reported last year, whereas until relatively recently active employer involvement in appeals was not common, employers now regularly contest workers' appeals. This issue has significant implications for the workers' compensation system, including contributing to delays in dealing with appeals, and warrants further discussion among stakeholders in the workers' compensation system.

Over the course of the past year, myself and other staff from the Workers' Advisers Program met with a project manager retained by the Workers' Compensation Board to review and provide recommendations on how to improve the Internal Appeals (Hearing Officers) process at the Board. We plan to continue to be involved with this process and we look forward seeing the recommendations sometime in 2012–13. We hope the project manager's recommendations will lead to changes that will reduce the increasing litigious and adversarial trend in workers' compensation matters.

A continuing significant driver for our budget is the increasing costs associated with obtaining medical information the Program requests to help in the pursuit of workers' appeals. The need to obtain medical information in more cases is also related to the greater litigiousness of our work. The Program finished the year at 100.4% of our budget authority.

In December 2011 Human Resources advised that retroactive pay-for-performance for Workers' Advisers (Solicitors), going back to 2008, would be paid. This was paid to eligible staff in January 2012. The amount to cover this expenditure, which was just over $90,000, was not foreseen when we did our forecast for 2011–12. In the absence of this expenditure, the Program would have been well under our budget forecast.

In cooperation with records management staff in the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, the Program implemented a new client filing system. Our client files moved from alphabetical to numerical identification. We are confident the costs incurred in making this significant change will be worth it because of the greater degree of confidentiality and organization it provides for our files.

At the Court of Appeal, we were successful in Hoelke, which is an important decision dealing with disablements and gradual onset injuries in the workers' compensation system. We were not successful in Creelman, but at least that decision gave us some

clarity regarding the principles applicable to workers' compensation benefits payable to incarcerated workers.

In applications for leave to appeal and appeals we are continuing to see the Court of Appeal usually apply a deferential standard when it reviews Appeals Tribunal decisions. Practically speaking, this standard of review makes it more difficult to successfully appeal decisions of the Appeals Tribunal. In this respect, the Court of Appeal has been following a number of Supreme Court of Canada decisions, beginning with Dunsmuir in 2008, dealing with the judicial review of administrative tribunal decisions.

At the Appeals Tribunal, the Program successfully represented a worker in an appeal by Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (formerly Devco) dealing with the treatment of early retirement incentive program (ERIP) benefits payable to former Devco workers. WCAT's decision, Decision 2011-209-AD (February 10, 2012), determined that ERIP benefits are not "earnings" as defined under the *Workers' Compensation Act* and could not be taken into account to reduce earnings-replacement benefits payable to these workers.

WCAT's decision relied on the Court of Appeal's decision in Almon (April 2009) and two WCAT decisions dealing with severance payments issued in the summer of 2009. The Program represented the workers in each of these cases. Following those decisions in 2009, the WCB changed its practice and effective December 2009 stopped using ERIP benefits to reduce earnings-replacement benefits. ECBC has appealed to the Court of Appeal from WCAT's decision. We continue to represent the worker and I expect this matter will be heard at the Court of Appeal sometime in 2012–13.

In my letter last year, I reported that I served as principal for an Articled Clerk. The Articled Clerk successfully completed all the requirements and was called to the Bar of the Province in September 2011. We were able to hire this person in a casual Workers' Adviser (Solicitor) position. Hiring the Articled Clerk and providing the casual position aligned well with the Program's succession planning as we have staff that are nearing retirement.

In June 2011 I successfully completed Executive Leadership Course put on by the Public Service Commission. This course was a valuable experience because of the skills development it provided and the opportunity it gave for formal and informal discussions with my peers from other parts of the Nova Scotia Public Service.

In September 2011 I attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Workers Advisors and Advocates (CAWAA) in Prince Edward Island. I arranged for Dr. Mary Lynch, an acknowledged authority in pain treatment and management, to make a presentation at this meeting, which was videotaped. I also prepared a paper for this meeting surveying recent leading workers' compensation decisions.

The annual CAWAA meeting and CAWAA telephone conferences throughout the year are great opportunities to network and exchange information with my counterparts from across the country.

In January 2012 I met with members of Injured Workers' Associations (IWAs) and staff from the Office of the Worker Counsellor (OWC) to discuss various issues. In January

2012 I also participated in a pilot session put on by the OWC for IWA members and union representatives which concerned helping workers navigate the workers' compensation appeals system.

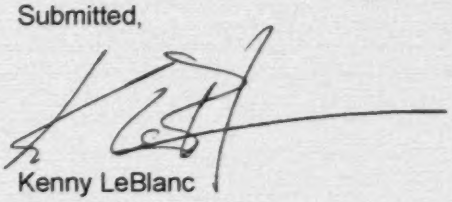
At other times in 2011–12, I met and discussed various workers' compensation issues with staff from the OWC and members of IWAs.

I continued to serve as a member of the Heads of Agencies Committee and the Issues Resolution Working Group as we worked to try to improve services to stakeholders of the Workplace Safety and Insurance System (WSIS). In my role as Chief Worker Advisor, I participated in the WSIS Annual General Meeting in May 2011.

I also regularly attended meetings of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education's Senior Management Team and with my fellow directors from the Department's Labour Services Branch.

We look forward to another busy and successful year in 2012–13.

Submitted,



Kenny LeBlanc
Chief Worker Adviser

Mandate and History

Workers injured and covered under Nova Scotia's *Workers' Compensation Act* are protected through benefits and services available under a no-fault insurance system. Through what is known as the historic trade-off, workers and their families give up the right to sue for the consequences of work-related injuries in return for compensation payable regardless of fault and without the need to pursue a lawsuit in court. The other side of the historic trade-off is that employers are responsible to pay assessments to cover the cost of the system in return for immunity from liability due to work-related injuries.

The Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB), established under Part I of the *Act*, is the policy-leader for the workers' compensation system, administers the Accident Fund made up of employers' assessments which covers the costs of the system, and is responsible for investigating and adjudicating claims in the first instance. Workers or employers may appeal WCB decisions to the Nova Scotia Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal (WCAT), established under Part II of the *Act*. There is a limited right of appeal from WCAT decisions to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.

The Workers' Advisers Program of Nova Scotia is established under Part III of the *Act* and the regulations as an independent legal clinic to provide free assistance, advice, and representation to injured workers and their families claiming workers' compensation benefits and who meet the Program's eligibility criteria. As a general rule, if the Program determines that a worker has a reasonable expectation of success of obtaining at least $500 or its equivalent in an appeal of a claim, that worker will meet the Program's eligibility criteria for service.

The Program receives the funding for its operations by way of a grant from the Accident Fund.

The Chief Worker Adviser is responsible for supervising the Program and reports to the Minister of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education. The Program's head office is in Halifax and we have an office in Sydney.

Workers' Advisers (who are lawyers and non-lawyers) with the Program travel throughout the province to meet with workers and discuss their claims and represent them at hearings at all levels of appeal in the workers' compensation system, including Court if necessary. Only Workers' Advisers who are lawyers are allowed to represent workers in Court.

The Workers' Advisers Program was established in February 1996 when Part III, along with most of the rest of the current *Workers' Compensation Act*, was proclaimed into force. The Program under Part III replaced the former Workers' Counselors' Program, which administered a certificate system whereby private law firms around the province provided legal representation to workers in connection with their workers' compensation claims.

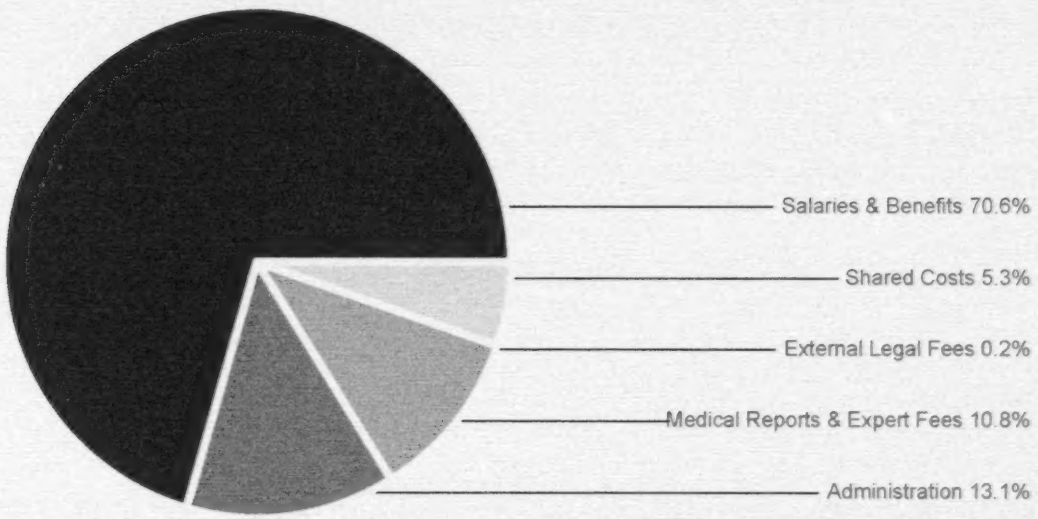
The Program's staff arranged for the opening of the Sydney office in May 1997. The Program has maintained the Halifax and Sydney offices since that time, while monitoring the caseload by county to determine whether other offices in other parts of the province should be opened.

Annual Program Expenditures

The total cost associated with the operation of the Program is charged to the Accident Fund administered by the WCB. The final 2011–12 report provided by the Department of Finance indicates the following expenditures:

	2011–12	2010–11	2009–10	2008–09	2007–08	2006–07
Salaries & Benefits	$1,904,748	$1,717,753	$1,593,543	$1,643,841	$1,327,695	$1,390,072
Administrative	$494,228	$534,275	$547,932	$520,494	$553,318	$414,064
Legal Services — External	$6,027	$10,731	$2,067	$1,895	$306	$2,156
Medical Reports & Expert Fees	$291,871	$275,182	$257,401	$138,257	$101,843	$74,773
Less Chargeable to Other Departments	**$0**	**($27,210)**	**($11,162)**	**($102,310)**	**($32,568)**	
TOTAL	**$2,696,876**	**$2,510,731**	**$2,389,781**	**$2,202,177**	**$1,950,594**	**$1,881,065**
% of Authority Spent	**100.4%**	**102.0%**	**97.1%**	**89.5%**	**82.1%**	**83.1%**

2011-12 Expenditures

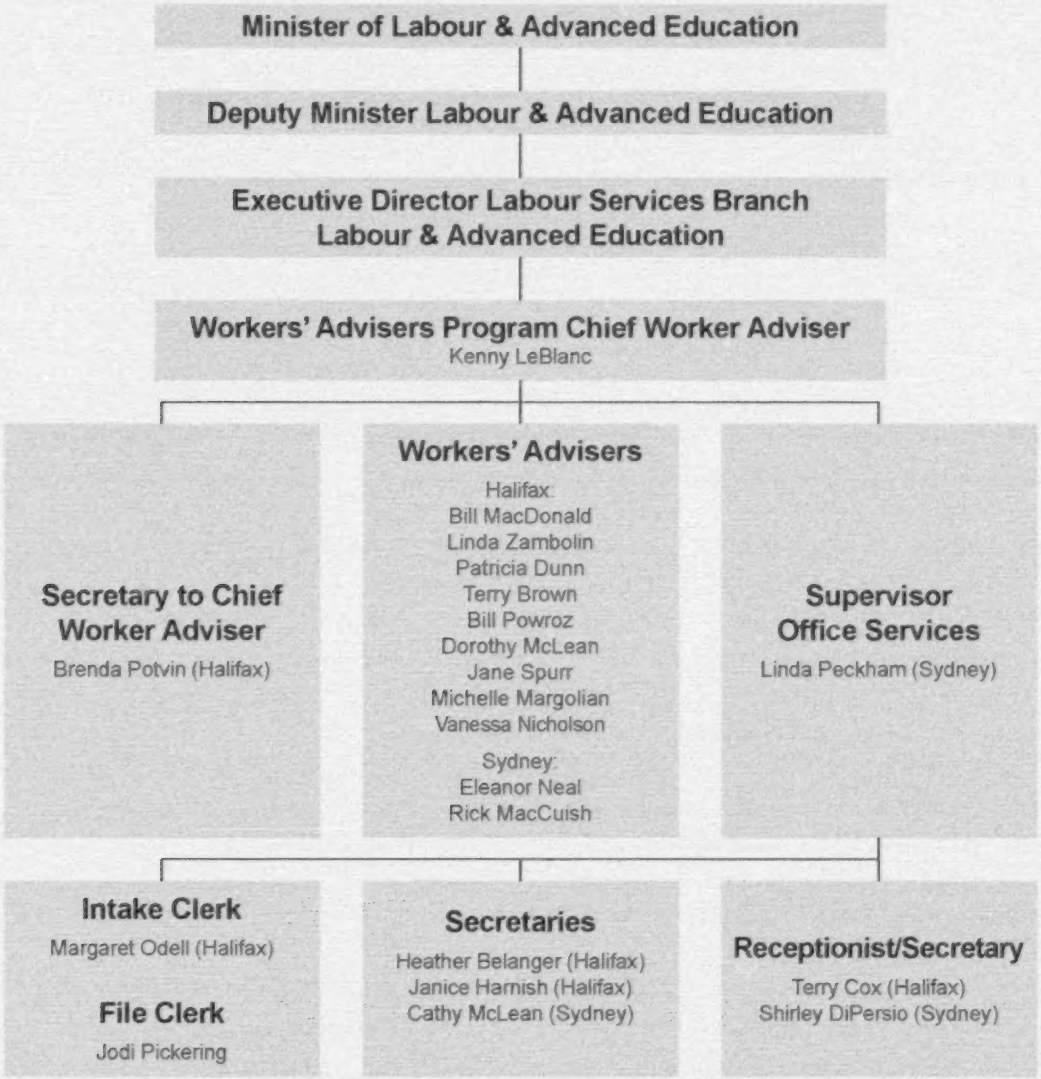


Personnel

The Chief Worker Adviser, the Secretary to the Chief Worker Adviser, the Intake Clerk, eight Workers' Advisers, a secretary/receptionist, and two secretaries work out of the Halifax office.

Two Workers' Advisers, the Program's Supervisor Office Services, a secretary/ receptionist, and a secretary work out of the Sydney office.

Organizational Chart



(Incumbents in place as of March 31, 2012)

Client Services

The service provided to workers by the Workers' Advisers Program can include representation through all phases of appeal in the workers' compensation system. It can begin with the first denial at the WCB and end when an appeal is completed or the worker is no longer eligible for service.

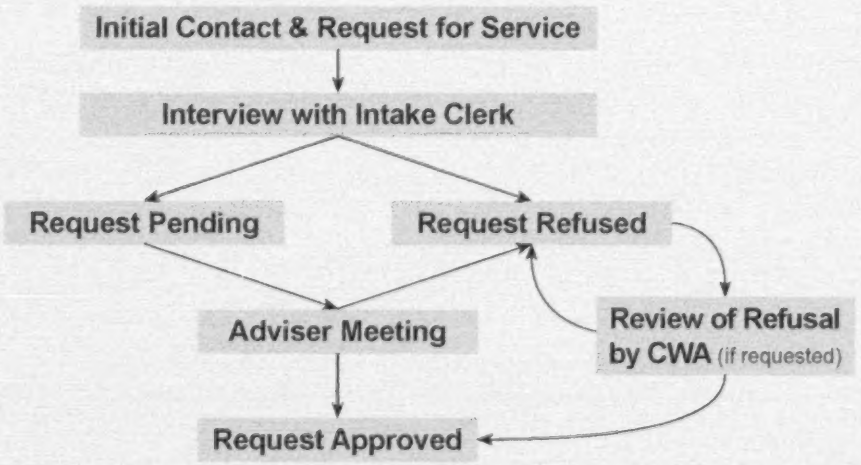
Intake

The Program's intake process first determines if the worker's request for service results from a written WCB decision. The Program's Intake Clerk is the point person for a worker's initial contact with the Program. If the worker does not have a written decision, the Intake Clerk will usually refuse service, but that worker may be referred to the Office of the Worker Counselor for assistance.

If the worker has a written WCB decision, the Intake Clerk will take the necessary information and open a file which will be assigned to a Workers' Adviser. Subsequently, the Workers' Adviser will contact the worker and arrange to discuss the claim and appeal in person or by telephone.

A worker refused service may request the application to be forwarded to the Chief Worker Adviser for review and further consideration.

A worker requesting service from the Program for the first time as a result of a WCAT decision bypasses the usual intake process and is referred directly to the Chief Worker Adviser for review and consideration. This process is followed in relation to WCAT decisions because a worker only has 30 days under the *Workers' Compensation Act* to file a possible appeal to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal from a WCAT decision.



Operations

Case Summary Statistics

Active # files at year beginning April 1, 2011 = 977
Active # files at year ending March 31, 2012 = 1,025

2011–12	Requests for Service	Files Opened	Files Closed	# Clients Served 2011–12
Apr/May/Jun	252	288	227	1,265
Jul/Aug/Sep	256	256	240	1,521
Oct/Nov/Dec	246	242	223	1,763
Jan/Feb/Mar	276	213	297	1,976
TOTAL FOR YEAR	**1,030**	**999**	**987**	**1,976**

"Requests for Service" represents the number of calls received by the Intake Clerk for processing during each of the reporting periods.

"# Clients Served 2011–12" represents the number of active files on April 1, 2011, combined with the total number of files opened to the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 2012).

On March 31, 2012, there were 138 pending service requests or clients that had gone through the intake process but had not yet been contacted by a Workers' Adviser to discuss their case.

Process

Service Waiting Time

Intake Period 2011–12	Halifax	Sydney	Out-of-Town		
			Bridgewater/ Yarmouth	Digby/Kentville/ Amherst/Truro	New Glasgow/ Antigonish/Port Hawkesbury
April/May/June	6.7	8.2	9.7	7.3	7.0
July/August/September	8.0	8.3	7.9	7.5	7.7
October/November/December	6.8	9.8	6.9	8.6	7.7
January/February/March	6.8	7.6	6.0	6.1	7.6
AREA AVERAGES	**7.1**	**8.5**	**7.6**	**7.4**	**7.5**
LOCAL OFFICES AVERAGE WAITING PERIOD					**7.8 weeks**
OUT-OF-TOWN AVERAGE WAITING PERIOD					**7.5 weeks**
PROVINCIAL AVERAGE WAITING PERIOD					**7.6 weeks**

The Program continues to monitor the waiting time for service on a monthly basis. Our goal is to respond to requests for service by meeting with the worker within 6 weeks of their initial request. **The provincial average waiting period for 2011–12 was 7.6 weeks (includes local and out-of-town times).**

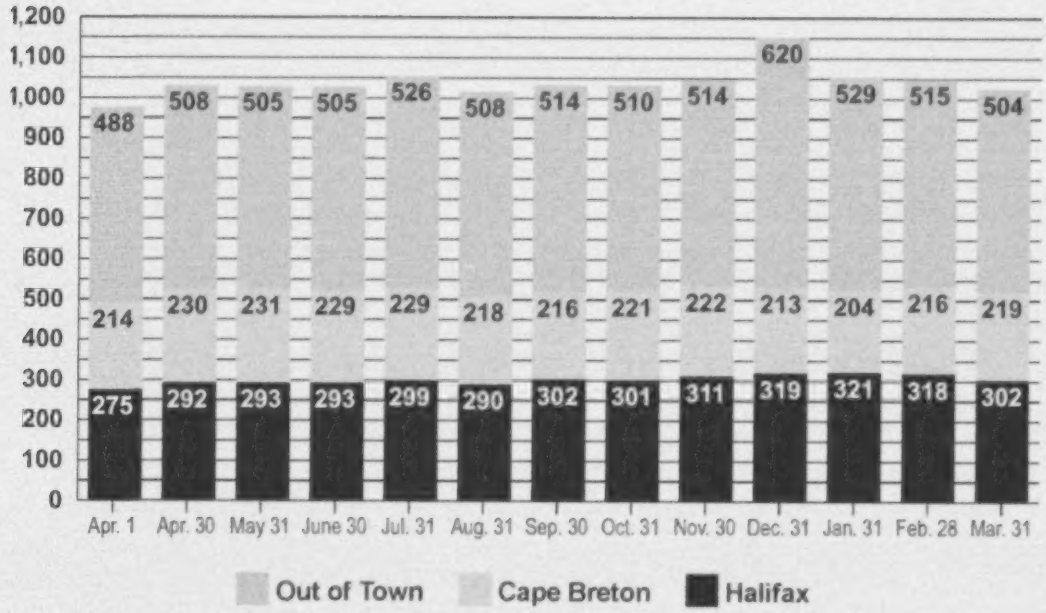
The waiting period for service for all intake is calculated from the date the worker first contacts the Intake Clerk to the date of the worker's first appointment with a Workers' Adviser (in person or by telephone) to discuss the worker's appeal. Factors affecting service wait times include access to the WCB claim file, both paper and electronic, and the Workers' Advisers' travel to out-of-town appointments and workload.

Client Count by County

On April 1, 2011, the Program had 977 active files. On March 31, 2012, there were 1,025 active files, a 4.9 percent increase over the course of the year with an average of **1,034** open files between April 1 and March 31.

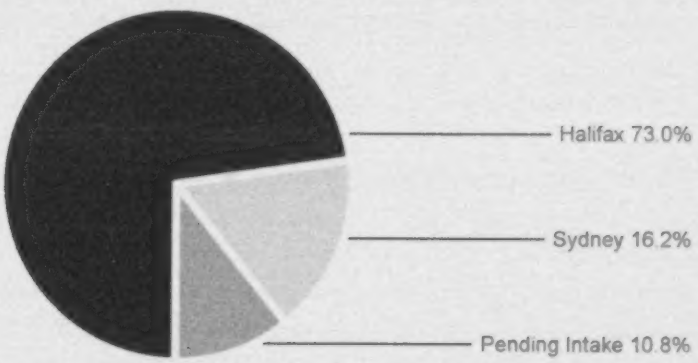
County	Apr. 1/11	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	Mar. 31/12
Annapolis	**23**	22	24	29	29	28	27	23	24	24	28	24	**22**
Antigonish	**13**	13	12	13	13	13	13	13	11	11	11	10	**12**
Cape Breton	**214**	230	231	229	229	218	216	221	222	216	204	216	**219**
Colchester	**34**	37	35	32	35	36	41	36	36	34	39	46	**46**
Cumberland	**60**	62	62	59	60	58	57	59	59	58	60	55	**48**
Digby	**7**	8	7	7	8	8	6	7	7	7	6	6	**8**
Guysborough	**14**	15	13	11	10	11	13	13	11	12	12	12	**13**
Halifax	**275**	292	293	293	299	290	302	301	311	319	321	318	**302**
Hants	**48**	47	49	50	50	51	51	56	62	60	58	52	**50**
Inverness	**10**	10	10	10	11	10	12	12	11	12	12	14	**12**
Kings	**69**	75	78	78	79	74	76	73	75	76	74	67	**70**
Lunenburg	**81**	90	87	89	90	85	84	84	87	91	97	97	**90**
Pictou	**54**	52	50	52	52	51	51	53	49	49	46	46	**47**
Queens	**14**	13	13	16	18	16	16	16	17	17	17	17	**18**
Richmond	**14**	15	15	12	13	12	12	11	11	13	13	14	**12**
Shelburne	**13**	14	14	14	15	15	15	14	13	14	15	15	**15**
Victoria	**6**	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	7	6	**8**
Yarmouth	**12**	11	11	24	16	12	12	12	13	14	14	15	**15**
Other	**16**	17	19	20	20	21	21	21	22	22	20	19	**18**
TOTAL	**977**	1,030	1,029	1,045	1,054	1,016	1,032	1,032	1,047	1,055	1,054	1,049	1,025

Client Count by Area



- The above chart graphically displays the proportion of clients living in Halifax, Cape Breton and Out of Town. The Out of Town figures represent all clients living outside metro Halifax or Cape Breton.
- An average of 29.2 percent of the Program's clients live within the Halifax Regional Municipality; 21.3 percent live within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and 49.5 percent reside outside the CBRM or HRM areas.
- Files are distributed between the Halifax and Sydney offices. One of the Advisers serving the Sydney area is located in Halifax.

File Distribution



Representation

Workers' Advisers provide representation to injured workers and their families pursuing workers' compensation benefits and services. Workers' Advisers consult with workers and others regarding claims, attend meetings and hearings, and obtain evidence and present it to workers' compensation decision makers.

Workers' Advisers have good access to research and other resources required to pursue appeals and are familiar with issues and pressures affecting injured workers and strive to achieve an effective working relationship with them.

The Workers' Advisers Program does not represent injured workers as a special interest group or lobby government for changes in legislation. The Program does not pursue other matters outside of workers' compensation claims, such as Canada Pension benefits, Unemployment Insurance, or Social Assistance.

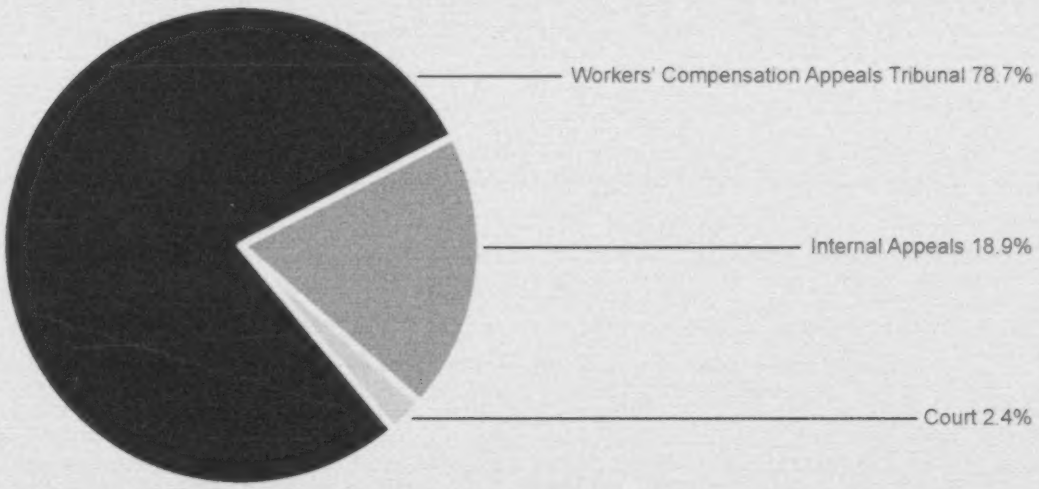
Workers' Advisers do not represent employers and they do not advise or represent governments or other agencies.

Program Statistics

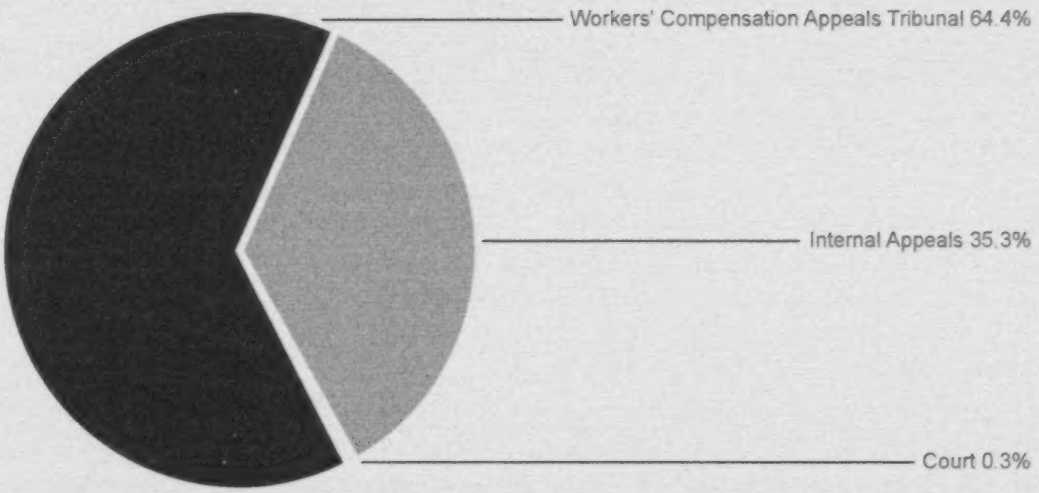
	Submissions/Hearings Done			New Appeals Filed		
	Court	Hearing Officer	WCAT	Court	Hearing Officer	WCAT
April	1	8	39	1	18	30
May	1	8	45	0	27	40
June	2	10	25	0	25	36
July	0	14	43	0	14	28
August	1	13	29	0	19	19
September	0	4	34	1	16	28
October	2	3	39	0	8	28
November	1	9	34	0	19	45
December	0	5	22	0	19	35
January	4	7	37	0	11	28
February	0	13	41	0	13	29
March	0	9	41	0	16	28
TOTAL	**12**	**103**	**429**	**2**	**205**	**374**

- The Program's resources are mainly focussed on appeals at the WCAT level.
- Workers typically file their own appeals to the Hearing Officer before going through the Program's intake process.
- The Program filed 2 new appeals to the Court of Appeal during the year 2011–12. An appeal to the Court of Appeal is limited because an appeal can only be made from an Appeals Tribunal decision on a question of law or jurisdiction pursuant to s.256 of the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

Hearings/Submissions



New Appeals Filed



Client Satisfaction

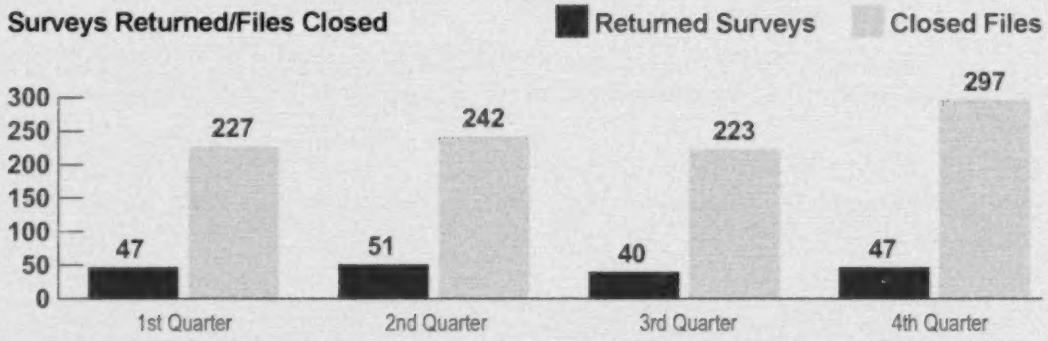
Client Survey Results

The Program began mailing satisfaction surveys to clients with their closed files in April 2003. This practice will continue so that future results will allow us to track satisfaction trends and address service issues.

	Apr./ May/ June	July/ Aug./ Sep.	Oct./ Nov./ Dec.	Jan./ Feb./ Mar.	Total	% RETURN FOR YEAR
Closed Files	227	240	223	297	987	
Returned Surveys	47	51	40	47	185	**18.7%**
Provided Comments	37	41	27	35	140	**75.7%**
Not Positive Outcome	15	9	17	11	52	**28.1%**
Negative Comments	5	4	5	9	23	**12.4%**
% Return for the Quarter	20.7%	21.1%	17.9%	19.1%		
Variance from Previous Quarter	10.5%	0.4%	-3.2%	1.2%		

Although 28.1% percent of the clients returning surveys did not have a positive outcome with respect to their appeal (52 divided by 185 surveys returned), only 23 negative comments were received (12.4%). **Our satisfaction rate remains high.**

Based on the data obtained from the returned surveys, we can determine that **87.6%** of our clients **"strongly agreed"** or **"agreed"** that the service provided by the Program staff satisfied their requirements.



Specific results to our questions are as follows:

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The program staff I dealt with were professional and friendly at all times.	Apr/May/Jun	82.1%	9.8%	2.4%	5.7%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	84.3%	10.5%	5.5%	0.0%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	60.5%	33.6%	2.0%	3.9%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	72.2%	20.7%	7.2%	0.0%
% FOR YEAR		**74.8%**	**18.7%**	**4.3%**	**2.4%**
2. In my experience, I felt the program staff had the knowledge and experience for dealing with my situation.	Apr/May/Jun	85.5%	4.3%	2.4%	8.1%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	80.0%	14.8%	1.6%	3.7%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	52.4%	37.3%	2.0%	3.9%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	66.9%	18.1%	9.0%	6.0%
% FOR YEAR		**71.2%**	**18.6%**	**3.8%**	**5.4%**
3. I felt the program staff did their very best to provide me with the best possible service.	Apr/May/Jun	83.8%	5.7%	4.8%	5.7%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	77.7%	13.7%	8.5%	0.0%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	56.5%	29.2%	6.1%	5.9%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	60.6%	22.1%	5.3%	12.0%
% FOR YEAR		**69.7%**	**17.7%**	**6.2%**	**5.9%**
		All the Time	**Most of the Time**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
4. My calls were returned within 24 hours.	Apr/May/Jun	50.0%	31.0%	10.8%	5.7%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	54.2%	33.7%	5.3%	6.9%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	35.9%	39.3%	18.7%	5.9%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	39.8%	35.8%	14.2%	10.2%
% FOR YEAR		**45.0%**	**35.0%**	**12.3%**	**7.2%**
5. My questions were answered to my satisfaction.	Apr/May/Jun	71.3%	18.2%	6.4%	4.0%
	Jul/Aug/Sep	79.5%	14.5%	0.0%	6.1%
	Oct/Nov/Dec	64.5%	21.4%	8.1%	6.1%
	Jan/Feb/Mar	66.3%	14.5%	8.7%	10.2%
% FOR YEAR		**70.4%**	**17.2%**	**5.8%**	**6.6%**
SATISFACTION RATING		**87.6%**		**12.0%**	

Committees and Associations

Canadian Association of Workers' Advisors and Advocates

The Canadian Association of Workers' Advisers and Advocates (CAWAA) is a national organization established to develop a professional system of sharing information and best practices across jurisdictions and explore emerging workers' compensation issues relevant to workers while respecting its members' distinct workers' compensation mandates.

The Chief Worker Adviser represents the Nova Scotia Workers' Advisers Program at this association and chairs its Research Committee. Additional information on this association is available on their website: http://cawaa.org.

Workplace Safety and Insurance System Advisory Councils and Working Groups

Nova Scotia's **Workplace Safety and Insurance System** (WSIS) includes workers, employers, the relevant statutory agencies (the WCB, WCAT, the Occupational Health and Safety Division of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and the Workers' Advisers Program), and others who provide services in the system. Additional information is available on the WSIS website: http://www.wsis.ns.ca/wsis/index_e.aspx

The **Issues Resolution Working Group** and a sub-committee, the **Issues Discussion Group**, consist of representatives from the Workers' Advisers Program, the WCB, and WCAT, and meet regularly to discuss workers' compensation issues and advise system partners on ways to improve issues resolution in the workers' compensation system.

The **Heads of Agencies Committee** comprises the heads of the four statutory system agencies:

- Director of the Occupational Health and Safety Division;
- Chief Worker Adviser of the Workers' Advisers Program;
- Chief Appeal Commissioner of WCAT; and
- CEO of the WCB.

Members of the Heads of Agencies Committee are responsible for the ongoing delivery of service to workers and employees in the system and for measuring and reporting of outcomes and progress in alignment with system goals. They are also responsible for coordinating strategic plan implementation.

Other Committees and Associations

Workers' Advisers Program staff are involved in other committees and associations to enhance their contribution to the workers' compensation system, the Department, and the community. They include:

- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- Labour and Advanced Education Senior Management
- Nova Scotia Barristers' Society
- Canadian Bar Association
- Labour and Advanced Education Human Resource Initiatives Team
- United Way Campaign
- Labour and Advanced Education Website Committee
- Labour and Advanced Education Diversity Committee.

Professional Development and Training

This year, as in the past, Program staff members took part in training programs to enhance their professional skills and personal development. Workers' Advisers attended various Canadian Bar Association (CBA) professional development courses such as:

- Advocacy 2012
- Assessment of Legal Capacity: The Challenge for Law and for Lawyering
- Interpreting Legislation
- CBA Annual Professional Development Conference — "Bar Tabs: Mixing Business with Pleasure"
- Short Term Agreements for Legal Services: Avoiding Conflicts through Plain Language Drafting
- Planning Appeals to the URB

Courses taken through the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society were:

- Advanced Cross-Examination Techniques

Staff members attend Departmental mandatory training, including First Aid/CPR, Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety, Ergonomics, Respectful Workplace, and Diversity and Employment Equity Education as required and workloads permit.